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ABSTRACT

In Japan, the production and broadcasting of television (TV) programs for children began in 1953. After the first few years of trial and error, children's programs gradually rose in popularity with the introduction of TV animation, dramas, special-effects photography, music/variety and quiz shows, comedies, and action dramas. Since the inception of Japan's TV services, the question of TV's impact on children has been the subject of research studies focusing on children's TV viewing time and its relation to their scholastic ability, passive receptivity, and relations with parents, friends, and teachers. None of the studies has produced solid conclusions. Since the mid-1970s, studies conducted by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute and other research organs have focused on analyzing the content of different TV programs. Under consideration has been the use of a test-produced program for preschool children to study their responses to the program and use the results in producing regular programs. Trends in TV programs for children are reported in Part I, which describes features of children's programs and other popular programs over the past 30 years with comments and examples of their impact on children. Part II discusses the findings of studies conducted over the same time period on the influence of TV on children. These studies take into account different amounts of TV viewing and study hours, intellectual capability, crime, and passivity. (DJR)

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Television for Children in Japan: Trends and Studies

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INTRODUCTION

In Japan, the production and broadcasting of television programs for children began with the start of TV broadcasting services in 1953. After the first few years of trial and error, children's programs gradually rose in popularity, as a result of such programs as "Chirorin Village and the Walnut Tree" ("Chirorin-mura to Kurumi no Ki" - the first of NHK's puppet series; 1956-1964) and U.S.-made programs such as "Lassie." In 1959, NHK started "With Mother" ("Okaasan to Issho"), a highly educational variety series for preschool children which is still running as of 1986. In the 1960's, the spectacular success of "Astro Boy" (1963 - 1966), Japan's first full-scale TV animation series, was followed by many other animated cartoon programs which soon captured the hearts of children all over Japan.

Besides TV animation, all sorts of programs intended for children of various age groups have been introduced on TV over the past three decades. These include dramas for teenagers, the "monster" and "metamorphosis" dramas produced with special-effects photography, music shows, variety shows, and quiz programs. Of course, children's TV-viewing has not been confined to programs made specifically for them; with equal enthusiasm, they have also watched programs intended for the general audience, such as comedies and action dramas, including Westerns and detective stories. Today, animated cartoon programs are so overwhelmingly popular among Japanese children that about 45 hours are broadcast per week (on seven VHF channels, in the Tokyo area). But many such programs are considered to contain anti-social elements, and concern is often expressed by parents and teachers over the possible harm which TV programs may have on children's mental development.

The question of TV's impact on children has been the subject of all sorts of reviews and research since the start of TV services in Japan. Various studies have been made on the amount of children's TV-viewing time and its relation to their scholastic ability, passive receptivity, and relations with parents, friends and teachers — but no solid conclusions have yet been reached. Since around the mid-1970s, more and more studies have come to be made by our NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute and other research organs, includ-

ing colleges and universities, by using the approach of first analyzing the contents of different TV programs and then considering the effects of television on children. But when we think of the enormous volume of programs broadcast for children, we cannot but feel that there is still a shortage of studies on the effects of TV which use program contents as the variable.

In addition, since around the mid-1970s, similar studies using a different method have been carried on by a project team consisting of program producers from NHK, researchers at the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, specialists at universities in developmental psychology or pedagogy, and others involved in the production of preschool children's programs. The method adopted by this project team is first to test-produce a program for preschool children (based on knowledge about their development), study the responses of such children to the test-produced program, and then use the results of such studies and experiments in producing regular programs.

Today, as we begin a multi-media age, we can expect even more material available for viewing by children. But, on the other hand, children's anti-social behavior has been posing serious problems. It will be increasingly vital from now on to approach the theme of children and TV from new angles, without adhering too much to the existing framework of studies on communication or to conventional concepts of children's programs.

This report has been written in line with such objectives. First, Part I will introduce some features of children's programs (and other programs popular among the children) over the past 30 some years, with comments and examples of their impact on children. Part II will introduce studies made during these years on children and TV by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute and other research organs.

A Japanese version titled "The Study of Children and Television in Japan – In the Thirty-Year History of TV [Kodomo to Telebi Ron ni Kansuru Kosatsu – TV 30-nen no Naka de]" by T. Akiyama and S.I. Kodaira, was published in the *NHK Annual Bulletin of Broadcasting Culture Research*, 29 (1984).

In this report, the term children's TV programs means programs intended for viewing mainly at home by children up through 15 years

of age. (In Japan, school-broadcast programs and other educational programs are widely used in school classrooms, as well. On this subject, please refer to *The Role of Educational Broadcasts in Japanese Schools* [2nd edition, 1986, © NHK] by T. Akiyama and S.I. Kodaira.)

I. TRENDS IN TV PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

I. TRENDS IN TV PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

1. The Early Days

Television broadcasting was started in Japan by NHK (the Japan Broadcasting Corporation), Japan's only public broadcasting organization, on February 1, 1953. This same time saw the beginning of the long-running debate on children and television in Japan, that still continues as vigorously as ever today.

NHK's inauguration ceremony for TV services was relayed on that first day from 2:00 pm, and a 30-minute "Children's Hour" program was transmitted from 6:00 pm. This program was divided into two parts, the first consisting of songs, and the second part a variety show. In those early days, NHK broadcast its "Children's Hour" programs under the following guideline: "The children should be inspired with vision and ambition for tomorrow through entertaining programs with an educational undertone, consisting of songs, dramas about daily life, variety shows, children's stories, shadow-plays, puppet plays, cartoons, and so on."[1]

NTV (the Nihon Television Network) started TV services six months after NHK, and two years later came the start of another company, Radio Tokyo Television (the present-day TBS—Tokyo Broadcasting System.) Children's programs started showing great progress both in quality and quantity.

The period immediately after the introduction of TV was a time of trial and error in creating TV programs for children. At that time, half the top-ten adult programs were like "The Festival of Comedians)" ("Kigekijin Matsuri"), generally relayed direct from a stage. Similarly, children's programs consisted mainly of dramas, musicals, puppet plays and shadow plays closely related to stage performances for children.

Regular daily or weekly TV series for children began around the mid-1950's. The first serialized puppet play "Chirorin Village" (NHK) was launched from April, 1956, as a weekly program. Here the puppets represented vegetables and fruits, and the program's unusual premise and lively dialogue attracted children all over Japan. It became a daily series in 1962, broadcast from Monday

through Friday, and it had 812 installments in all, running up to April, 1964.

In addition, a number of dramas for children, including "Albert Schweitzer" and "The Burmese Harp" ("Biruma no Tategoto"), were telecast in the so-called children's hour around 6:00 pm, mainly by NHK. From around 1958, there were more serialized dramas running from two to four months, and 1959 saw the start of a longer drama series, "Homerun Classroom" ("Homuran Kyoshitsu"), stories of ordinary children who play baseball, which ran until 1963. The philosophy of this series was explained by its producer as follows: "The object is to bring the phenomena around us into focus and take a fresh look at them with both the children who perform in the drama and the children who watch the programs. It is expected that children will discover useful elements through this process to help them grow into worthy members of society." (*Hosobunka*, Feb. 1961)

The year 1961 saw improvement, both in quality and quantity, in NHK's "Children's Hour" programs: puppet plays, children's dramas, quiz programs, science programs, scientific dramas and variety shows featuring new TV technology were telecast between 5:30 and 6:30 pm. In short, there was a remarkable diversification of programming for children.

Around this same time, U.S.-made TV series such as "Superman" (1956-60), "Rin Tin Tin" (1957-60), and "Lassie" (1957-64) began to attract children and also adults throughout Japan.

Then came the first Japanese-made TV film series for children, "Moonlight Mask" ("Gekko Kamen" – 1958-59). This Japanese-style super-hero program was broadcast for 10 minutes from 6:00 pm. from Monday through Friday on one of the commercial stations. From its very first telecast, "Moonlight Mask" seemed to sweep the children of Japan off their feet. A survey conducted by the Japan Readers Association and Publication Science Readers Center on primary and junior high school children in 1959 showed this TV series as the top favorite among children surveyed in the Tokyo metropolitan area.

The social impact of this series was very great, and in several tragic incidents, children died from trying to imitate its super-hero. While

children loved its exciting scenes, many parents and teachers began to criticize the program for its "interference with the mental development of children."

Discussing the popularity of "Moonlight Mask," Hiroshi Inoue of Kansai University wrote of his observations on students at his university in 1975:

> The thing that surprises me when I go to parties with the students is that they sing a series of theme songs from TV programs such as "Moonlight Mask," "Astro Boy," and so on. Among the most popular is the song of "Moonlight Mask". He is a hero, a superstar, almost a god for them. They say, "It's very likely that his commitment to justice served as the starting point for my later attitude towards life and society," or "We have been taught about justice by 'Moonlight Mask'". When I hear such confessions from the young men, I can easily realize how great an impact this TV series had on them in their childhood.[2]

Children who grew up with these various programs in the early days of TV are now parents themselves, and they are naturally interested in the influence of the today's TV programs on their own children.

2. The Start of the Animation Boom

The year 1963 marked a turning point in Japanese TV history. On New Year's day of 1963, the first Japanese-made TV animation series, "Astro Boy" ("Tetsuwan Atomu") made its debut. It was a TV adaptation of the popular cartoon serial of the same title by Osamu Tezuka, in the comic magazine for boys, *Shonen*.

This weekly 30 minute program (Sat. 7:30 - 8:00 pm.) showed how a human-like robot boy and his family fought against evil to keep peace on earth. Its household viewing rate jumped to 30% right from the very beginning, and the series continued for four years, until the end of 1966. The popularity of the series has been quite lasting, too. In a survey conducted by Nihon Television in 1977, people from age 15 to 69 gave top rating to "Astro Boy," when answering the question, "What is the most impressive animation program you have ever watched on TV?" "Astro Boy" attracted the attention of foreign TV companies as well, and it has since been broadcast in more than 40 countries. (*Hoso Hihyo*, Dec. 1983).

The great success of this series clearly demonstrated to commercial television companies, and to the sponsors of TV programs, that animation programs can be a very promising business proposition, which can include tie-ins with other products. For example, Astro Boy seals, distributed as gifts along with products by the sponsors of this series, became a instant hit, and post offices even faced a shortage of mail-bags to carry the post-cards requesting such seals. Parents were urged by impatient children to stand in long lines in front of the company to obtain the seals directly (*Shukan Sankei*, May 11, 1964). The era of close ties among animation TV programs, advertising, and commercial products started with "Astro Boy."

Thus commercial television companies started telecasting animation programs one after another during 1963-64. The worldwide interest in outer space, following the launching of manned satellites, provided the backdrop for the golden age of SF (science fiction) animation programs from around 1965, including "Astro Boy," "Space Boy Soran," and so on.

The amount of telecasting time devoted to animation programs rose rapidly. As of February, 1963, there were 42 programs broadcast for a total of 421 minutes each week on 7 channels in the Tokyo area; this time practically doubled as of August, 1965, when 61 animation programs were transmitted for 935 minutes. Broadcasting of animation programs, which had first been concentrated between 5:00 pm. and 7:00 pm., was extended up to 8:00 pm., into part of prime time.

Naoyoshi Horikawa of the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* analyzed the response of children to this rapid increase in animation programs on the basis of interviews, and he concluded that "children can tell the difference between interesting TV animation programs and boring ones, but as a matter of habit, they watch the useless ones as well. The impact of TV should be assessed once again, in this light."[3]

Since the mid-1960's, many other types of animation have appeared as well: some, like "Sazae-san," deal with everyday life, and there are also comedies like "Q-Taro the Ghost", programs for girls like "Candy, Candy," sports dramas, and so on. Around the end of the 1960's, a baseball series titled "Star of the Giants" ("Kyojin no Hoshi") made a strong impression on children, including some who are professional baseball players today. In addition, volleyball became one of the most popular sports among girls because of a TV animation series.

3. Monsters and Metamorphosis

Another type of TV program which has attracted Japanese children since the mid-1960's is the super-hero drama such as "Ultraman". In these series, heroes with names like Ultraman, Captain Ultra, and Ultraman Taro, fight against huge monsters one after another to protect the Earth. Special effects, including high-speed photography, were used often to express the big fight scenes powerfully. "Ultraman," the second of the "Ultraman" series (1966-67) created a sensation by reaching a 70% viewing rate in the 4-12 year age group, an all-time high for children's programs.

Newspapers and magazines devoted considerable space to the birth of this new type of hero.[4] Pictorials and catalogues of Ultraman heroes and monsters were published, and books and records were put on sale. The total sales of related products are said to have reached over ten billion yen. (*Shukan Asahi*, Apr. 7, 1967)

Specialists on child psychology tried to explain this boom as follows: the monsters become objects of great attraction for children just because the various restrictions, imposed at school and at home, leave them no choice but to release their pent-up energy through their imagination. (*Shukan Asahi*, Apr. 7, 1967) There was also a lot of criticism of this trend, as in the article, "Ultraman, the Destroyer" by Kenzaburo Ōe, one of Japan's leading intellectuals (*Sekai*, May 1973). Most parents also criticized the programs' violence, and hated the grotesque monsters.

The second Ultraman boom started in 1971, supported by the younger brothers of the first "Ultraman generation." Then, around 1980, young people who had grown up with those "Ultraman" programs created a new boom, by publishing journals about Ultraman and the monsters. There have been rebroadcasts on TV, and also video casettes put on sale.

Another photographic trick action drama series, titled "Masked Rider" ("Kamen Rider") was started in 1971. The characteristic feature of this drama was that the hero could change into a superman simply by shouting "Change!" ("Henshin!") In no time, the expression "Change!" became a catch-phrase among Japanese children, and again, there was another round of "metamorphosis" dramas on

TV. The producer of "Masked Rider" made the following comments on the object of the series and the attraction it had for children (1972):

> Children today are goaded by their environment to study harder and strive harder, racing toward goals that are always out of reach. A craving for "change" thus becomes deep-rooted in their minds. When the hero changes to become a superman, nothing can be more welcome to the children.[5]

He also concluded, while reviewing the boom of the "Ultraman" series with its grotesque monsters around 1965, that children would ultimately lose interest in the programs if scenes of terror and cruelty escalated too far. Because of this, he said, "I have laid emphasis in promoting creativity and constructive imaginative power in children."

Another tragic incident, however, took place just around this time. Using a kindergarten jacket as a cape to imitate the Masked Rider, a boy slid down a slide shouting, "Change!". The jacket got caught, and his neck was broken (May 1972). This incident highlighted the impact such programs can have on children. Ironically, the message "Don't give the Rider Kick! Don't imitate the Rider Jump!" was broadcast at the end of the programs, but this was of no use in preventing accidents.

However, various programs along the same lines as "Ultraman" and "Masked Rider" are still broadcast today in Japan and have high viewing rates among children, especially young boys.

Then, starting from 1973, programs featuring metamorphosis and robots appeared in the TV animation world, and series such as "Majinga Z," "Great Majinga Z" and "UFO Robot Grendaiza" gained high viewing rates. These robot animation series were criticized severely, and blamed for "adverse effects on children, tending to make them violence prone." In fact, such series have been exported abroad, and have faced similar criticism wherever they have been shown.

To cite one example, President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines issued an order on August 27, 1979, suspending the telecasting of children's animation programs. This ban involved mainly series produced in Japan, like "Majinga Z." Two reasons were given for the

ban; first, the fighting scenes were extremely cruel, and could adversely affect children at an impressionable age, and second, the programs were too much concentrated in the early evening, when children are supposed to study. (*Tokyo Shimbun*, Aug. 29, 1979) In another case, the series "UFO Robot, Grendaiza" was broadcast over French television from July 1978 (under the title of "Goldluck") and made an instant hit with French children. It earned, however, a bad name among parents and teachers because its many violent scenes and monotonous story. No Japanese robot animation of this kind has since been broadcast on French TV.

4. TV Animation Programs Based on Literary Classics

As the popularity of super-hero dramas declined somewhat, animation series based on famous stories came into the limelight. This could be said to reflect the desire to portray a broader range of human values.

The first such series, in 1969, was "Moomin" (based on stories from Finland by Tove Jansson). Then Fuji Television set aside a period of 30 minutes (from 7:30 pm. on Sunday evenings) for exclusive showing of children's programs for family viewing. So far, they have broadcast animation versions of famous children's stories from throughout the world, such as "Tales by Hans Christian Andersen" (1971), "Heidi" (1974), "A Dog of Flanders" (1975), "The Little Princess" (1985), and so on. (These Japanese-made animation series, based on stories from European literature, have proved very popular among European children, too.)

The success of such series inspired the production of programs on Japanese themes as well, like "Tales of Old Japan," ("Manga Nippon Mukashi Banashi," 1975-). As Jiro Saito has said, "This series is expected to revive our traditions, which we are losing little by little in our family life."[6] In fact, it has now become one of the longest running popular TV series for Japanese children. "Sazae-san," originally a comic-strip series on everyday life, started as an animation series in 1969, and its popularity has continued even today among different age groups, including adults.

NHK started transmitting animation series in prime time from April, 1978, adapting stories from other countries such as "Captain Future," "Belle and Sebastian," and "The Yearling." For the series of "The King's Fifth" (1972-73), co-production was carried out with the Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télédiffusion.

5. TV Animation in the 1980's

At present, 45 hours and 40 minutes of animation programs (including rebroadcasts) are transmitted per week on the 7 VHF channels in the Tokyo area. (see p. 23) The producers are very much aware of the problems caused by such over-production. A wide range of related industries have sprung up to sustain the popularity of the animation series. The sponsors rely on the sale of related products to offset deficits in the production cost. Thus, children, especially in the lower age groups, are the targets of fiercely competitive sales campaigns. (A large number of subcontractors work to create a single series, so, small discrepancies may appear in the characters, which are, of course, often criticised severely by young fans.

There is also a remarkable increase in animation titles produced primarily for overseas sales, and many of these are not necessarily of the highest quality.

However, the famous-story animation boom started by the commercial stations induced NHK to start its own high-quality animation series, and since then, animation programs have diversified to cater to a wide range of age groups. This trend still continues in the 1980's.

We must also mention the great popularity of the "Doraemon" series in this fiercely competitive animation market. The story of "Doraemon" by Fujiko Fujio (a team of two famous cartoonists) was already popular among children, and its telecast as animation series since 1979 has been highly successful. In October, 1983, at its peak, 70 percent of 3-4 year old boys watched "Doraemon." Even today it is one of the most popular TV series, especially among young children. Doraemon, a cat-like robot who has come from the world of the future to live with a boy in a typical Japanese family, grants requests with his super-powers. The whole series has a comical tone: although Doraemon is a kind of super-hero, he is cute and friendly.

Yoshiya Soeda has tried to explain the attraction of "Doraemon" as follows (1980):

> Children are slowly losing the wonderful world of miracles and marvels under the pressure of the so-called utilitarianism of adults, with their over-emphasis on education. The power of children's imagination is

being thoroughly suppressed. But "Doraemon" is unveiling a world of wonders for children once again.[7]

"Dr. Slump" is another series with a very high viewing rate, especially among young girls. Related products sell out in no time, and primary school children pick up funny expressions used by the characters on the program. In a survey conducted by NHK (1983), mothers cited this popularity of cartoon catch-phrases among children as the main reason for their own aversion to such TV programs, and their unwillingness to show such programs to their children.[8] "Dr. Slump" is another case among many that have created controversy over the impact of TV programs on the linguistic ability of children.

Examining trends in animation programs since around the mid-1970's, it can be said that children now seem more attracted to comical heroes and main characters with a sense of humor, rather than to serious heros of the Superman type. Besides "Doraemon" and "Dr. Slump," another clear example is "Muscleman" ("Kinnikuman," 1983-). In this series, professional wrestlers, including the main hero Muscleman, fight against evil wrestlers with various super-techniques. The series has become extremely popular among young boys. The programs involves serious fighting scenes, of course; but at the same time, the wrestlers often show very humorous expressions and mannerisms. This factor seems to be very important to attract children today.

6. Other Popular Children's Programs

NHK has put priority on drama series for children from the start of its TV broadcasting. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, various children's stories, both Japanese and foreign, were broadcast at 6:00 pm. Kenichi Koyama, the head of the Children and Youth Program Department of the Educational Section at NHK, stated in a group discussion (1966):

> After all, we would like to produce programs that will never pass unnoticed by children. Top priority has to be accorded to such programs, even if the number of viewers is somewhat less.[9]

NHK broadcast short drama series (with from 4 to 20 installments) every weekday between 6:00 and 6:30 pm. from 1972 up to 1978, to reach 100 titles in all. Looking back, the producer of some of these series stated: "Those were the days when there was a strong fear that TV was distracting children away from reading. Yet it was found that dramatization of famous literary works actually induced children to read the original works. Thus, such series made a positive contribution to carrying on our cultural legacy."

One popular U.S. drama series for family viewing, "The Little House on the Prairie," has been broadcast by NHK since 1977. In addition, NHK has broadcast eleven series of puppet plays, some based on literary classics.

Among the programs by commercial broadcasters, the series "Chako-chan, Ken-chan" (1965-1982) by TBS has a unique place in children's television. This series centered on two ordinary children, Chako (a girl) and Ken (a boy) in a typical Japanese family. The stories were based on various situations which children face every day. The series succeeded in retaining a steady viewing rate over period of 15 years. That is indeed remarkable, especially since it was shown during prime time, where the ratings of other programs, including animation series, fluctuated drastically.

Yoji Hashimoto of TBS made the following comment on the successful long run of this sort of program:

> This series has been planned on the assumption that the personality of a child is the same as that of an adult, and a program that will have equal appeal to both adults and children can be produced if the

materials of the drama are taken from situations in which adults and children interact. We were lucky to have sponsors who wanted the drama to have educational value for children. Our producers believed that the parents should understand children's points of view, and that children should understand the feelings of parents. I believe the warmth of home can be depicted only on the basis of such give-and-take.[10]

Looking back to the days when he wrote the scripts for this program, Sekiro Mitsuhata states "It was possible to write such a long series just because I tried to write it from a child's standpoint, without leaving any room for undue flattery of children." We can only regret that this type of drama series has now disappeared.

From the late 1970's, dramas based on school life — both junior high and primary school — have become popular among children. Teachers are usually portrayed with humanity and humor in these programs, and they are loved by their students. NHK has broadcast this type of drama series, with a much more educational tone, since 1963. Ordinary junior high students played in NHK's TV drama series, "Junior High Diary" ("Chugakusei Nikki.")

Teenage viewers, especially girls, also enjoy dramas and music variety programs where teenage TV actors and singers perform.

NHK broadcast a news variety show for children, titled "Six p.m.! This Is the Information Desk" (1978-84, 30 minutes, Mon. through Fri.) which gave various types of information, often using letters, photos, illustrations, and phone-calls from child viewers, so that viewers could feel as if they themselves were taking part in the programs.

We must not overlook the popularity among children of general variety shows. For example, "Eight O'clock! Get Together, Everybody" ("Hachijidayo! Zenin Shugo", 1969-85), hosted by a group of five comedians called the Drifters, retained a steady viewing rate of around 60% among the 4 - 12 year age group. Shown at 8:00 pm. on Saturdays, it was also watched by a great number of adults.

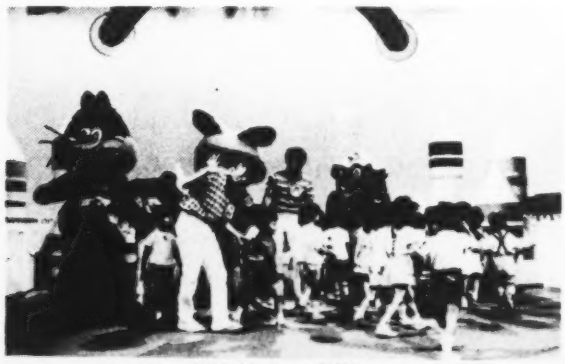
Charges of use of bad language and unacceptable behavior such as throwing food have been levelled against this program off and on. PTAs and educational committees have branded it as the very worst TV series, and mothers have named it as the most undesirable

program in various surveys. It has popularized some types of funny dances and tongue twisters, and encouraged the tendency to take school less seriously. Despite the assertion of the producer that it was meant for adults, not for children, it continued to be a hit series among children. Takashi Mutoh and his team have analyzed this variety show, and named "laughter" as its main attraction for children (1983).[11] The series has been so popular, that it was said if one of the main characters told the young viewers "Do your homework!" or "Take a bath!" at the end of the show, unruly young people immediately became very obedient. (*Tsukuru,* August 1973)

This series has been imitated by many other comedians, in programs such as "How Far Will Kin-chan Go?" ("Kin-chan no Dokomade Yaru no?" 1976-), "We're Wild and Crazy Guys" ("Oretachi Hyokin-zoku," 1981-) and so on. While these programs are not intended for children, according to the producers, children in fact imitate many of the phrases and manners of various comedians on these shows. In this sense, such variety programs may present a typical case of the impact of TV on the children.

7. Programs for Preschool Children

These are generally programs with a strong educational orientation, intended for viewing at home. In response to the fact that children at home come in contact with TV for increasingly long hours, NHK started in October 1959 the program "With Mother" ("Okaasan to Issho"), designed for viewing by small children before their entrance to primary school, along with their mothers, "for the purpose of nurturing rich sensibility when a child is at the most important stage of character-formation." This series, still broadcast regularly, is now the longest-running of all children's TV programs in Japan. It has included many popular series of segments such as "Boo Hoo Woo" (an adaptation of "The Three Little Pigs"), staged by performers disguised as animals.



With Mother (NHK)

This "With Mother" series is very similar to the BBC's "Play School" or the Australian ABC's "Playschool". It is a studio variety show, 25 minutes long, consisting of several different segments such as a skit, calisthenics in which a large number of preschool children join, a game-and-song segment hosted by a young man and woman (called "Brother" and "Sister" by the children), story-telling, animation films, and films about small children's daily lives.

The main goals, of this series are to enrich the imagination of preschool children and to help them socialize. At present, this series is broadcast Monday through Saturday from 9:30 in the morning, and repeated at 5:30 in the evening. Because this series is produced pri-

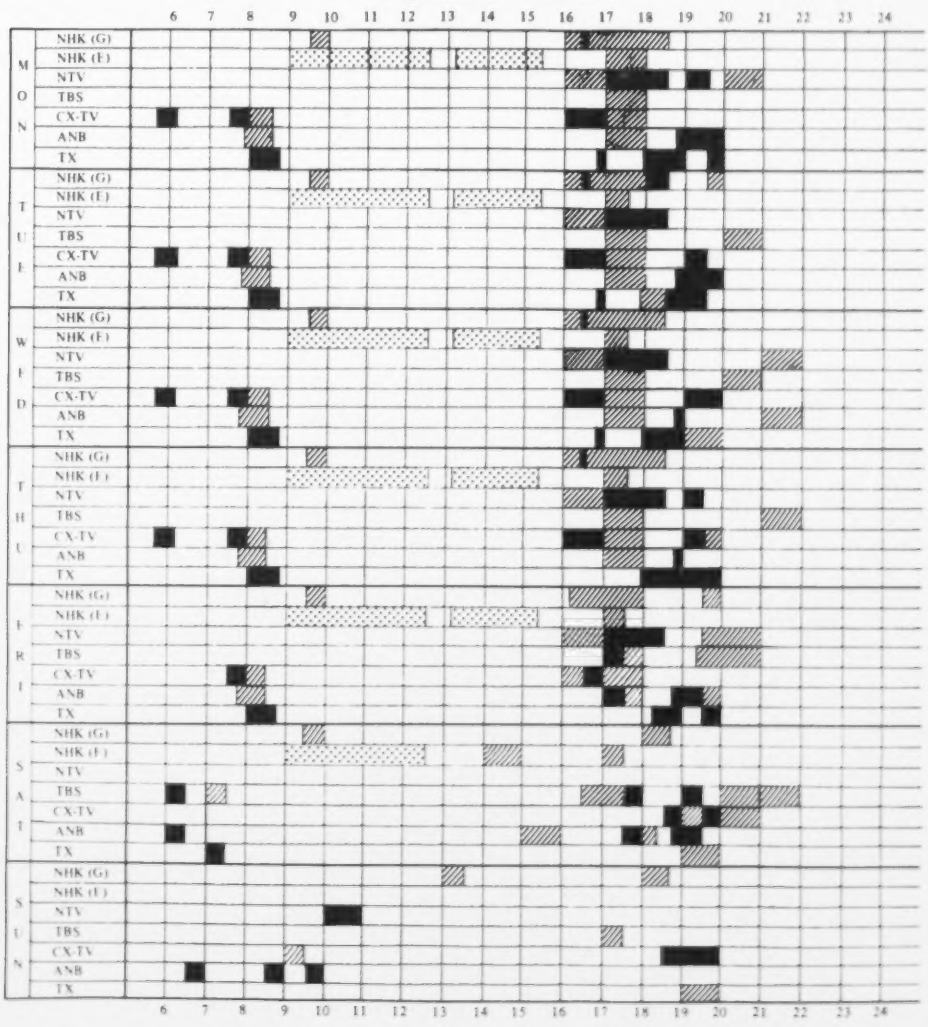
marily for viewing at home, since the beginning of the 1980s the producers are putting special effort into developing segments designed for children just 2 or 3 years oid. In recent years, more and more children of 4 or 5 are going to kindergartens, and it is clear from surveys that more and more very young children have come to watch this series. At the same time, the producers of children's programs are continually studying how to develop new types of programs for preschool children, in cooperation with researchers.

Besides the "With Mother" series, NHK broadcasts a total of six different series of TV programs for kindergarten and nursery children on its Educational TV Channel. The commercial TV stations, too, have developed programs for preschool children at home, such as "Romper Room" (1963-1979), the Japanese version of the popular American series. Especially after NHK began to broadcast the U.S.-made series "Sesame Street" (1971-82), commercial stations in Japan began airing new programs one after another for preschool children. By 1975 as many as seven different series were broadcast regularly by commercial stations in the Tokyo area alone. However, by around 1980, almost all of these series for children had gone off the air. Among the commercial stations' programs for preschool children, only one has survived until today — "Open Up! Ponkikki" ("Hirake! Ponkikki," 1973-) by the Fuji Television Network. In fact, it is increasingly hard to find sponsors for highly educational programs designed for preschoolers. Animation programs are more attractive to sponsors, since profits can be expected through the sale of related merchandise.

8. Children's Programs and How They Are Watched in Japan Today

In order to give a rough idea of ongoing trends in Japan, we will present some data on how children's programs are broadcast by the seven VHF stations in the Tokyo area.

Table 1. TV Programs for Children [VHF only : Tokyo Area] Nov. 1985



NHK ..... Nippon Hoso Kyokai (G) General, (E) Educational
NTV ..... Nippon Television Network Corp.
TBS ..... Tokyo Broadcasting System, Inc.
CX-TV ..... Fuji Television Network, Inc.
ANB ..... Asahi National Broadcasting Co., Ltd.
TX ..... Television Tokyo Channel 12, Ltd.

Children's Programs
Animation Programs
School Broadcasts/ Programs for Kindergartens

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This chart includes not only programs which broadcasting stations aim at children up to about 15 years old but also programs not necessarily aimed at children but actually viewed by a large number of them. In the chart, ■ represents animation programs and ▨ indicates NHK's school-broadcast programs, including those for kindergartens.

Compared with many other countries, the volume of programming for children in Japan is very large, and it includes about 45 hours a week of animation programs. The fact that such animation programs are concentrated every day in the prime viewing time of 7:00-8:00 p.m. may certainly be considered a phenomenon unique to Japan. Although TV animation programs also enjoy high popularity in the United States, their broadcast is concentrated on Saturdays, especially in the morning hours.

To learn how many hours children are watching television every day, a nationwide survey was conducted in November 1985 by the audience-ratings survey group of the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute. According to this, children in the 7-12 age group are watching for an average of 2 hours 13 minutes a day, and those in the 13-15 age group, 2 hours 24 minutes a day. Incidentally, the survey showed that the average daily viewing time of Japanese as a whole is 3 hours 21 minutes.

Table 2. Average Viewing Time

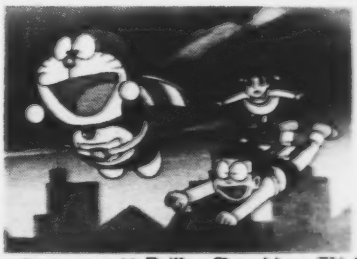
	All (7 or older)	Primary-school students (7~9)	Primary-school students (10~12)	Junior high school students (13~15)	Senior high school students (16~18)
Weekday	3:15	2:02	2:14	2:15	2:18
Saturday	3:16	2:17	2:27	2:37	2:36
Sunday	3:50	2:36	2:43	3:04	3:16
Average	3:21	2:13		2:24	2:29

As for preschoolers up through age 6, we have some data from a large-scale survey conducted in 1979 by NHK on "TV in the Lives of Preschool Children."[12] The survey revealed for the first time that children as young as two or three are often watching more than three hours a day, a figure that exceeds the average for primary or junior-

high school students. (Refer to p. 45) While there has been no more recent large-scale survey, a survey conducted in October 1985 in the Tokyo area revealed that children 3 or 4 years old are watching TV for longer hours than those age 5 or older.

The NHK survey in 1985 also showed that, of the ten programs most widely seen by children in the 7-12 age group, nine were animation programs. These nine included such titles as "Doraemon" (44%) and "Muscleman" (37%). According to other surveys as well, one finds that, among preschoolers 3-6 years old, animation programs and "monster" dramas shot with special effects continue to be very popular. Among the children 13 or older, their preference shifts from animation programs to comedy variety shows, song programs and quiz shows. (Table 3, pp. 26～27)

Some Popular TV Programs for Children



• Doraemon (© Fujiko, Shogakkan, TV Asahi)

• Dr. Slump (Fuji Television)

• The Little Princess (Fuji Television)

• Captain Tsubasa (Television Tokyo)

• Jasupion
(© TV Asahi, Toei, Asahi Tsushinsha)

• Changemen (© TV Asahi, Toei)

Table 3. Most Popular TV Programs for Children and Teens

3~6 year-old boys

1.	Doraemon *	Fri.	19 : 00
2.	Jasupion [monster drama]	Fri.	19 : 30
3.	Dr. Slump *	Wed.	19 : 00
4.	Muscleman [rept.] *	Tues.	18 : 00
5.	Open up! Ponkikki (Hirake! Ponkikki) [preschoolers' program]	Wed.	8 : 00
6.	Changemen [metamorphosis drama]	Sat.	18 : 00
7.	Tales of Old Japan (Manga Nippon Mukashibanashi) *	Sat.	19 : 00
8.	Q-taro the Ghost (Obake no Q-taro) *	Sun.	9 : 30
9.	Touch (Tacchi) *	Sun.	19 : 00
10.	Sazae-san *	Sun.	18 : 30

3~6 year-old girls

1.	Doraemon *	Fri.	19 : 00
2.	The Little Princes (Shokojo Sarah) *	Sun.	19 : 30
3.	Dr. Slump *	Wed.	19 : 00
4.	Sazae-san *	Sun.	18 : 30
5.	Q-taro the Ghost *	Mon.	18 : 45
5.	Tales of Old Japan *	Sat.	19 : 00
7.	Q-taro the Ghost *	Sun.	9 : 30
8.	Open up! Ponkikki [preschoolers' program]	Tues.	8 : 00
9.	Jasupion [monster drama]	Fri.	19 : 30
10.	Sazae-san *	Tues.	19 : 00

* animated cartoons

(Video Research Ltd: Tokyo area, Oct. 28~Nov. 3, 1985)

7~12 year olds

1.	Touch (Tacchi) *	Sun. 19 : 00
2.	Doraemon *	Fri. 19 : 00
3.	Dr. Slump *	Wed. 19 : 00
4.	Muscleman (Kinnikuman) [Rept.] *	Tues. 18 : 00
5.	Get Together (Zenin Shugo Best Ten) [variety]	Sat. 20 : 00
6.	Fujiko-Fujio Wide *	Tues. 19 : 00
7.	Muscleman *	Sun. 10 : 00
8.	Hokuto no Ken *	Thur. 19 : 00
9.	Sazae-san *	Sun. 18 : 30
10.	Captain Tsubasa *	Thur. 19 : 30

13~19 year olds

1.	Hokuto no Ken *	Thur. 19 : 00
2.	The Best Ten [music variety]	Thur. 21 : 00
3.	The Top Ten [music variety]	Mon. 20 : 00
4.	Touch (Tacchi) *	Sun. 19 : 00
5.	Volleyball Game	Wed. 19 : 30
6.	School-Boss Detective (Sukeban Deka II) [action drama]	Thur. 19 : 30
7.	Sazae-san *	Sun. 18 : 30
8.	Yuyake Nyan Nyan [variety for teens]	Fri. 17 : 00
9.	Takeshi no Genki ga Deru TV [variety]	Sun. 20 : 00
10.	Mild Kin-don! [comedy variety]	Mon. 21 : 00

* animated cartoons (NHK: Kanto area, Nov. 25 ~ Dec. 1, '85)

Japan's TV animation programs are almost entirely based on stories run in comic magazines, and primary school children in particular are inveterate readers of such magazines as well as watchers of TV animation. Most Japanese TV animation, compared with counterparts in Britain and West Germany, may be considered faster-paced and more lively.[13] Computer animations, too, are gaining popularity. Furthermore, during the last several years, Japanese-made animations are increasingly popular in Asian markets such as Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines, and European markets such as Italy, Spain and France.

In short, the influence of popular TV animation programs on the lives of preschoolers and primary school children seems to be great indeed. Because those popular programs invariably tend to become the subjects of play (through mimicking and conversations), children who are ignorant about such TV programs often find themselves left out.

At present, among the boys in the 5-10 age group, mimicking of the professional-wrestling techniques seen in "Muscleman" is so popular that, when they watch this series at home, the children study the hero's moves very seriously and practice the techniques so that they may use them when they play with their friends. Among 7-12 year-old boys, the "Captain Tsubasa" animation series based on soccer is so popular that interest in soccer itself has been rising sharply; more children are now playing soccer and are watching TV soccer matches played by grownups. In fact, soccer has already become more popular that baseball, which had always been at the top of the popularity list for boys in Japan before.

Furthermore, in Japan, already 33% of all households own a VCR (home video recorder/player), and even children of age five or six can operate the VCR machine themselves, to record and play back popular animation programs over and over again. Also, TV games, to be played on home TV screens, are becoming enormously popular. At present more than half of the boys in the 7-12 age group are said to be enjoying TV games at one time or another during their free hours. Such use of TV screens by children is expected to affect trends in TV viewing by children in ways entirely different from what we have seen in the past.

II. STUDIES OF TELEVISION'S INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN IN JAPAN

1. The Start of Studies on Children and Television

When NHK, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, began television service in 1953, there were only 866 receivers in all of Japan. The number of receivers rose to 0.91 million sets (or 5.1% of all households) four years later in 1957, the year in which the NHK Radio & Television Culture Research Institute (now the Broadcasting Culture Research Institute) carried out the First Shizuoka Survey (p. 32) – so at that time TV was far from commonplace. (As described in Part I, in 1957, the year when the survey was begun, U.S. TV series such as "Rin Tin Tin" and "Superman" made a great hit with children, and the popular program "Moonlight Mask" started in 1958. But in those days, NHK transmissions were limited to about 2 hours around noon – mainly for news and school program – and from 6:00 pm to 10:30 pm.)

But even before television was introduced in Japan, some adults expressed concern about its possible effects on children. All studies on this subject in Japan so far have focused on whether or not TV really has harmful influence.

Some studies about the effects of television on children have produced conclusions of an extreme nature. The reason for this is not hard to find. In 1950, Shuhei Ishiyama (then Head of the Faculty of Education at Tokyo University of Education) went to the United States to assess the effects of television. He appreciated the power of television as a medium of information, but at the same time he could not ignore the problems faced by educators and parents because of TV's interference with children's education. He brought back with him a sense of alarm about exposing children to this new medium.[14]

Then, the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee of the Upper House of the U.S. Congress held public hearings on television and juvenile delinquency in April 1954. During these hearings, Ms. Frieda B. Hennock, then head of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) made a strong appeal to ban potentially harmful pro-

grams, on the basis of findings that some contain a high proportion of scenes of violence. At the same hearing, professor Paul F. Lazarsfeld of Columbia University said the time had come to conduct scientific studies on the effects of television on children. These views were reported in the Japanese media, causing quite a bit of concern for the infant television industry of Japan.

Although not intended for children, live broadcasts of professional wrestling, started in 1954, had a great attraction for them. These broadcasts became the first major targets of criticism for their effect on children. Some school children were seriously injured – and one even killed – trying to imitate the wrestlers. PTA groups and others expressed such concern over the influence of those programs that, in mid-1955, NHK excluded pro-wrestling from its broadcast schedule.

However, as commercial stations began to offer more mass entertainment over the following years, criticism of television increased. Rather than being aimed at specific programs, such criticism tended to be general – for example, "There are too many absurd programs," "TV leads to empty-headedness," and "Children don't study because of TV".

Takeo Furu, who designed and carried out the Shizuoka Surveys* in 1957 and 1959, summed up his motive as follows:

> Reading reports on American surveys, I was very much shocked as a professional broadcaster, and then I thought it was my social responsibility to do a similar survey and to try to find suitable remedial measures, in case the survey reveals adverse effects.[15]

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*The NHK Radio & Television Culture Research Institute made large-scale surveys in Shizuoka city in 1957 and 1959, in order to clarify the influence of television on children. These surveys have been highly praised as high-quality, pioneering efforts in this field. In fact, they are regarded as one of the four major early studies on this subject in the world, along with that by Himmelweit in Great Britain, Schramm in the United States, and Malezke in West Germany. Ten years later, in 1967, another similar survey was made in Shizuoka, taking into account new views on children's televiewing habits.

During 1958, the influence of television on children came to be discussed all the more by PTA's and women's groups all over Japan. At the same time, such government agencies as the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, the Ministry of Education and the National Police Agency had begun to interest themselves in the influence of TV on children and teenagers. In May, 1958, the Central Juvenile Problem Committee of the Prime Minister's Office held a national conference, which concluded that "the recent rapid increase in juvenile crimes is mostly resultant from the bad influence of the mass communications media." It warned the television, film, and publications industries to exercise better self-control over their contents. By 1960, NHK began to cut violent scenes from TV entertainment programs, and some objectionable programs were cancelled.

Besides the Shizuoka surveys mentioned above, a number of other important surveys on the effects of television on children were made in the decade from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties. One such survey, carried out by Arata Yoda and his associates, is popularly known as the University of Tokyo Survey (1961). This was conducted on behalf of the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters, and its main purpose was to study the effects of television on the basis of opinion polls and audio-visual experiments. As soon as the survey was completed, the magazines associated with the commercial broadcasting companies vied with one another to publish its findings under big headlines such as "No Bad Effects of Television Could be Detected". But when one reads the report carefully, it becomes clear that such headlines were not entirely appropriate.

Just as concern about possible harm from TV was introduced to Japan from abroad, so the models for research on this question in Japan were drawn up on the basis of previous work in Europe and the United States, such as that by Lazarsfeld. In particular, the effects of television on children observed in Western countries – especially in the studies by Himmelweit – attracted the attention of Japanese researchers, who paid little attention to differences in Japan's TV programming and other circumstances.

In 1969, Giyoo Hatano proposed a model for developing a detailed method to classify the contents of programs, after assessing the over-

all situation. He wrote, "It is essential to have a detailed framework that will be capable of interpreting the characteristic features of the messages of the programs that provide the primary stimuli, so that studies on the effects of mass media, at least from the psychological angle, may be developed on scientific lines. However, in actual practice, thing is an extremely difficult proposition."[16] In fact, no one has yet come forward to take up the task of developing such a model framework, and even today most studies remain limited to the effects of television as a medium of mass communication, and that in a very generalized way.

In 1982, Sachiko I. Kodaira (the present author) asked 200 university students to write an essay on what television programs had a lasting effect on them. Surprisingly, 51 percent of the students mentioned the "Ultraman" series (p. 12), which had been a top hit when they were in kindergarten and primary school. The following responses were typical: "If some specific title was mentioned, I could retell the story (that originally lasted for about 30 minutes to one hour) on the spot, including every move in detail." "Ultraman, who always took the side of the just to punish the wicked, taught me that one should not do wrong, and bad actions always bring punishment in the long run." This, at least, is one bit of concrete evidence regarding the effect of television, although it may not be what most researchers are looking for.

But if "Ultraman" has indeed played some role in the psychic development of the present generation of university students, then what sort of influence are the popular TV series of today having on the children who will reach adulthood around 2000 AD? This question must be the starting point of studies on the effects of television on children.

2. Studies on the Effects of Different Amounts of TV-Viewing

The Time Budget Survey conducted by NHK in 1960, seven years after the introduction of television, revealed that boys 10-15 years old spent an average of around 1 hour 45 minutes in watching television on Sundays. This figure rose to 3 hours 54 minutes, a net increase of 129 minutes, just five years later, but no appreciable change has taken place since in the amount of viewing, from that time up to today.

It goes without saying that an increase in televiewing time means less time for other activities. The Second Shizuoka Survey revealed in 1959 that the increase in televiewing time led to a reduction of 14 minutes in studies, 32 minutes in helping with housework and running errands, and 9 minutes in sports and other outdoor activities for boys in the 5th grade of primary school.[17]

The difference in televiewing time in relation to sex and age has attracted the attention of researchers from the very beginning. In 1966, Takeo Furu carried out a comparative study of the various types of surveys done in Japan up to that time, and concluded that "televiewing time increases with the increase in age, reaching a peak around the fifth and sixth grade of primary school, followed by a decline in junior high school, to reach a low point in high school and the later teenage years. Then it starts rising once again."[18] The survey "Children and Young People in an Information-Intensive Society" ("Johoka Shakai to Seishonen") carried out by the Prime Minister's Office in 1981, generally agreed with these findings by Furu.

The effect of televiewing time on school performance and intellectual development has attracted attention not only of researchers, but also of educators and parents since as early as 1955. The First Shizuoka Survey of 1957 revealed that TV had some adverse effects on the development of reading ability, but no appreciable effect on ability in the natural and social sciences in the case of first-year junior high students. The Ministry of Education Survey of 1959 also revealed no particular effect of TV on the academic performance even of children who watched TV for more than 3 hours a day. As has already been mentioned, the University of Tokyo Survey of 1961 did not find much negative influence of television on children.

However, subsequent surveys on the relation of TV-viewing time to intellectual development and academic performance have failed to produce any uniform pattern. Takeshi Shimoyama and his team in 1969 compared the results of an adaptability diagnosis test and televiewing time and found that low social adaptability correlated with greater viewing time.[19] A survey in 1981 revealed that "the rate of heavy TV-viewing is higher among primary and junior high school students and young people who are aware that their school performance is below average."[20]

On the other hand, a survey carried out by Hiroo Kondo in Osaka (1979) showed that primary school pupils with good academic performance tend to be frequent TV-viewers, and that the programs they watch are also more varied. As the cause of this correlation, he suggested children's capacity to absorb a large volume of information from TV.[21]

3. Controversies over Possible Harm from TV-Viewing

As described in Part I, U.S.-made TV films were popular among Japanese children in the mid-fifties, but starting with "Moonlight Mask" in 1958, Japanese programs gradually became dominant. Concern has long been expressed in West Germany, Canada and Australia over the "contamination" of children by American culture through TV, but such controversy lessened in Japan after around 1965.

The decade starting from around 1955 can be called the Golden Age of studies on children and TV in Japan. Besides the four surveys discussed above, surveys were also conducted by the advertising company Dentsu, and by Kagawa University. Then, the decade 1965 - 1975 saw the summing up by a number of researchers of studies carried out in Japan and abroad. For example, in 1966, Hirohisa Suzuki surveyed studies on reactions to mass communications and concluded that there had been no noticeable impact on the intellectual development of children, and there was no substantial evidence to support the theory that TV-viewing encourages passive and escapist tendencies.[22]

In 1969, Isao Tsuji, summarizing experimental studies on the question of television and delinquency, concluded that "delinquency and violence or crime are the extreme examples of adverse impact, and there seems to be simple room for optimism in so far as such adverse impact is concerned." In his opinion, other factors, such as domestic environment and basic disposition are more responsible for delinquency than TV programs.[23] Also in 1969, Giyoo Hatano concluded that "all these studies on TV broadcasting have made practically no contribution to improving the quality of programs" – although he said he appreciated the emphasis in these studies on the importance of TV as a factor in child development.[24]

Such conflicting views are not found only among researchers on mass communications. In 1969, a primary school teacher, Masafumi Ishigami, stated that "a large part of children's programming has been monopolized by vulgar cartoons and dramas. Because of this children are getting emotionally upset, and problem children who have lost independent ways of thinking are becoming a headache even in

classrooms!" He then expressed his grave doubts about whether the producers of children's programs pay any attention at all to the question of children's future happiness.[25]

In contrast, a participant in a group discussion at a commercial TV company totally rejected the hypothesis of "TV evil," stating that "those who say TV has adverse effects should take their children into the mountains, far from human habitation. Since children should be exposed to TV more and more, parental guidance following such exposure is most vital."[26]

Ever since the later half of the 1960's, such confrontation has continued between broadcasters and viewers, and studies on children and TV have proved totally ineffective so far in resolving the controversy. More recently, Takashi Mutoh has introduced experimental data from studies carried out in other countries, which suggest harmful effects from TV-viewing (1979).[27] But Tsuji, on the other hand, has pointed to negative findings regarding such effects (1982).[23]

In addition, many surveys have been conducted to find out what parents and teachers think about the effects of television on children. While the largest number of respondents seem undecided, those who replied "I think TV is having bad effects on children" outnumbered those who said "I think TV is having good effects."

Sachiko I. Kodaira (the present author) took charge of analysis about the effects of TV on children in the survey on "People in Their 30s and TV" (1985). She summarizes her findings as follows: "As we have seen, people in their 30s, partly because many of them have a preschooler or a primary school child in their home, generally have a keen interest in children's relations with TV. And while people who have a child 3 years old or younger in the family tend to think that TV is good for children, those with a child past the age of 4 tend to worry more about possible harm."[28] (Table 4)

Table 4. Parents' Views on TV

	More good effects than bad	About the same level of good and bad effects	More bad effects than good
< Men >			
Whose last child is:			
0~3	37.1%	38.5%	24.5%
4~6	16.7	38.3	43.4
Of primary school age or older	18.3	34.1	47.6
< Women >			
Whose last child is:			
0~3	34.3%	40.4%	24.6%
4~6	23.8	37.5	38.8
Of primary school age or older	25.5	32.2	41.6

In 1981, the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute conducted a survey in 2,000 kindergartens throughout Japan to study the behavior of children 3-6 years old in relation to the general influence of TV. In 77% of the kindergartens surveyed, teachers said that the children's language deteriorated as a result of their imitating the words in TV programs and commercials, 66% reported that children sometimes acted roughly by imitating TV violence, and 42% believed that TV had some harmful effects on preschool children's emotional development. Referring to rough behavior by children, many mentioned imitating kick-boxing and professional wrestling, jumping down from high places, and imitating gun fights. Takashiro Akiyama, the researcher at the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute who analyzed the results of this survey, sums up his findings as follows: "Children in the age group from 3 to 4, in particular, are in a stage of development when imitative behavior is most active, so they are very strongly and directly affected by TV, either in a positive or a negative way."[29]

Parents and teachers have become increasingly critical of TV lately. The FCT (Forum for Children's Television)* has been stressing the importance of "media education," based on the belief that TV viewers themselves should acquire the ability to select good TV programs on their own and to evaluate programs critically.

*Established in 1977, the FCT aims at better TV programs. Its members include parents, teachers, researchers, writers, and TV producers who take part as individuals. The FCT also carries on practical studies and holds discussions and study meetings from time to time. It maintains contact with ACT (Action for Children's Television) in the United States, a national citizen's group formed in 1968 (by four women in Massachusetts) which from the beginning has been extraordinarily effective in pressuring the television industry for reforms in children's programming and advertising.

4. TV-Viewing and Children's Relations with Parents and Friends

In the Third Shizuoka Survey in 1967, parents were classified as the "control by scolding" type and "control by rule" type. It was found that the scolding approach failed to have any effect on controlling children's TV-viewing habits, but both televiewing time and infatuation with TV could be controlled when the parents made rules on TV-viewing.[30]

No similar large-scale survey on the impact of TV on children has been carried out since this survey in 1967. However, the survey carried out by Kazuko Fukaya in 1981 has pointed out that viewing control exercised by the teacher and the mother's attitude toward television both play a major role in determining not only the length of a child's contact with TV, but also his overall social life.[31]

Shigeru Mori and others based studies on the assumption that the membership group and the reference group of a child form the main factors in his exposure to TV and his reactions (1960). They investigated whether the selection of programs and channels TV differs according to whether the child is "peer-oriented" or "family-oriented." It was found that the peer-oriented type showed a preference for programs with a high entertainment factor transmitted by the commercial TV stations, whereas the family-oriented type preferred programs of a more informative and educational character.[32] Mori made a similar survey in 1980 of primary and junior high school students, following the same procedure, and found that the peer-oriented child was, indeed, involved more deeply with TV than the family-oriented child.[33]

5. Analysis of Program Contents

In 1969, a bawdy program by two comedians ("Konto 55 no Yakyu Ken.") became a hot issue in the Broadcaster's Council for Better Programming, which had been established in 1965 to study public reactions to current programs and make recommendations for improvements in the programming of both NHK and the commercial stations. There were loud protests against this program and similar ones for their "vulgarity," but very few researchers in the field of mass communication have actually taken up the question of problems created by "vulgar" programs. Trying to analyze the reason for this, Akira Yamamoto stated in 1973 that it is not possible to define the concept of "vulgar" or "coarse" with precision, so it has not been possible to develop any acceptable survey procedure.[34] This situation has not changed substantially even today.

However, from around 1975, researchers in Japan started analyzing program contents when studying TV's impact on children. In 1978, Sumiko Iwao carried out an analysis of 139 drama programs, including animation programs, transmitted in the evenings during one week. She found that these dramas featured 557 dead and 727 injured. Compared to a similar analysis of programs in the United States, the proportion of scenes depicting agony was much higher in Japan. However, in Japanese TV dramas, it is very often the righteous hero of the drama that falls victim to such agony. Since the children identify with the main characters who suffer pain, she concluded that it is difficult to say whether such scenes of violence serve as a model for inducing violence in children.[35] But, Shigeru Hagiwara, a co-researcher in this project, has sounded a warning about the impact of such TV programs, especially on young children, saying that the frequent depiction of death in those dramas may convey a wrong image of death to children, and thus encourage suicidal tendencies.[36]

The analysis of the contents of TV programs has become a very popular theme for the members of the FCT (Forum for Children's Television) since around 1975. For example, one researcher has pointed out that "the roles depicted in home life dramas for children show many limitations related to age, sex and professions that hardly

reflect the realities of present-day, diversified society."[37] Another study has shown that SF animation programs contain a high dose of "mechanical and supernatural violence" and "violence culminating in death," and animation dramas depicting everyday life contain "verbal violence" as an essential element.[38] It is expected that these studies will bridge the gap existing at present between research on "program content" and on TV's impact on children.

Sachiko I. Kodaira (the current author), a researcher at the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute has conducted several surveys in which she had children view TV programs and afterwards answer questions about their contents. She conducted this type of survey on children in the age group of 10-15 in 1981, using a series of drama programs set in a junior high school,[39] and again in 1983, using the series "Three Kingdoms," an NHK puppet play based on a famous Chinese historical narrative.[40]

Kodaira further investigated other programs popular with children in the same age group in order to find out what factors made those programs so attractive (1983). She found that "children on the whole liked programs that would make them laugh, and provide them with some interesting topics to talk about among themselves .... On the other hand, sometimes the children look to TV programs as a source of cultural knowledge and information." She also noticed that children apparently think that "there are too many programs which are more or less the same in content." Based on such findings, Kodaira concludes that "TV broadcasting stations, instead of aiming at short-term achievement of high audience ratings, should continue their efforts to produce programs that children will enjoy remembering for many years, by making effective use of the factors that keep children attracted to TV."[41]

In 1985, Kodaira conducted a different survey, this time on younger children (age 3-4 and 7-8), to find out how they view TV programs.[42] In this survey, Kodaira had the children view in their own homes three different types of animated programs popular

among the children of the same age groups, and then had their mothers observe and report on the various responses that the children showed to each program. The survey showed differences according to sex and age among the children viewing the same program in terms of their degree of preference and enthusiasm and the ways in which they took interest in the program; and it also showed differences between the children's likes and dislikes and the mothers' evaluation of the programs. For instance, with regard to "Muscleman," one of the most popular TV programs at present, little boys felt it was "thrilling, humorous and delightful," while mothers found the program "grotesque, noisy and stupid."

Kodaira found that the mothers who had been asked to assist in the survey were all cooperative, possibly because such mothers, most of whom were in their 30s, seldom have the chance to watch TV together with their children. It was also found that the mothers were often quite surprised at the responses of their children.

With regard to younger children in particular, it is essential that analyses are continued of the effects of TV, using such methods as mentioned above, with attention to how the ways of viewing and reacting to certain programs change in the process of growth and development.

6. Growing Attention to Programs for Preschoolers

Among the various issues concerning the relationship between children and TV, the viewing of TV by preschool children has always been a major focus of interest. But even though news about the success of "Seasame Street" in the United States and the subsequent analysis of the effects of this program were introduced in Japan, studies on TV programs for preschoolers in Japan were begun only recently.

Around the middle of the 1970s, the number of households owning color TV sets reached 20 million in Japan, and a growing number of households installed additional sets. Then, in 1979, NHK conducted a survey on "Television in the Lives of Preschool Children," by questioning the mothers of children in the age group 0-6.[12] The survey showed that a child 1-1.5 years old generally watched TV for two hours a day, and one between the ages 2 and 3, as much as 3 hours a day (Fig. 1). In particular, a child whose mother watched TV a lot would watch TV for longer periods as well. Even in the case of infants 4-7 months old, more than half of them showed interest in the sounds and pictures of TV. (Fig. 2, p. 46)

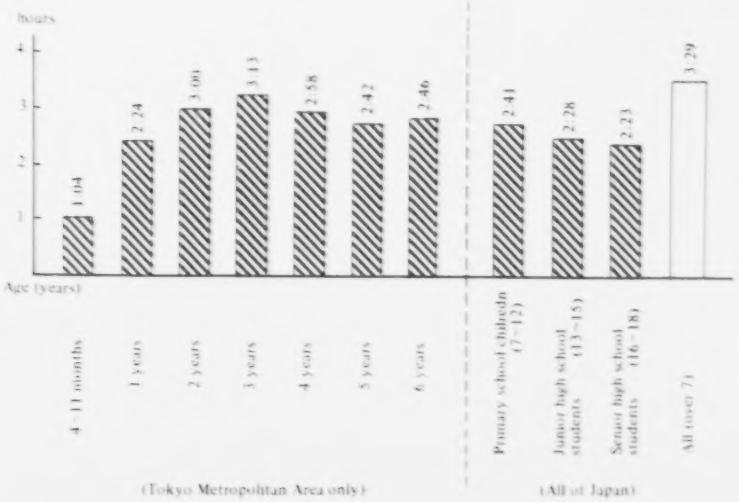


Fig. 1 Average TV Viewing Time of Japanese Children per Weekday (Nov. 1979)

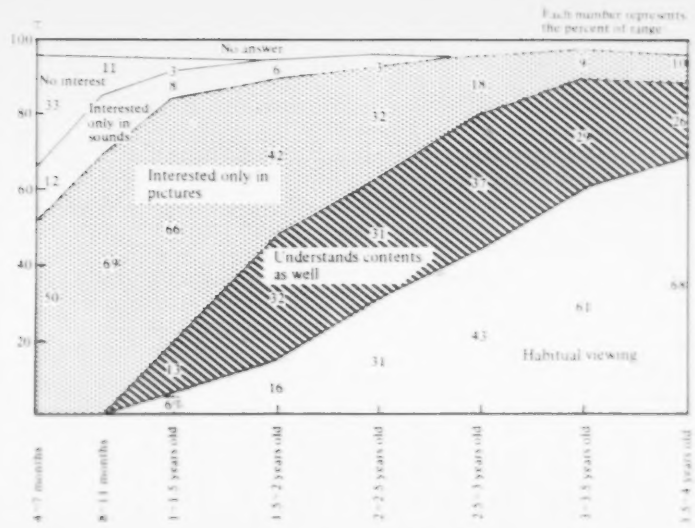


Fig. 2 Development of Reactions to TV by Preschool Children (Tokyo Metropolitan Area)

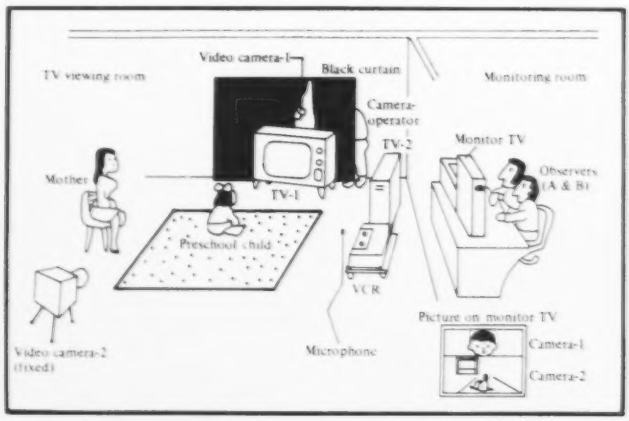
More than one-fourth of the 8-11 month-olds imitated hand-clapping, and more than a half of the children one year old or older mimicked calisthenics on TV. Furthermore, toddlers between 1.5 and 2 were seen more and more imitating the songs and speech heard on TV, about half of the 2-year-olds were seen asking questions while watching TV, and 70% of the 3-year-olds wanted to get some of the products advertised in TV commercials.

The publication of this survey triggered the start of other research, using various approaches, about the relationship of TV and preschool children, especially those of lower ages. In 1980, Nobuhiko Kikuchi of the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute conducted a survey on children in the age group of 7 months through 4 years, by having their mothers make daily records of the titles of TV programs viewed by their children during a certain week, and the children's responses to each program viewed.[43]

Takashiro Akiyama and Sachiko I. Kodaira of the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, in parallel with a number of psychologists at universities, has been conducting since around 1980 a series of experiments on TV programs for preschoolers using the following method.[44] Various kinds of experimentally-produced TV

programs are shown to preschool children (2-6 years old) individually in an experiment room, as shown below. Observers in the next room watch the children on a TV monitor and record their behavior every 2 or 3 seconds while the programs are being shown — i.e, noting whether the children are really watching the screen and whether they mimic what they are seeing or show other kinds of responses, such as asking questions. Some additional analyses are done to check, for example, how far the child understands the programs, by having a specialist ask the child some simple questions both before and after the TV viewing.

Experimental Studio



So far, various types of TV programs (in test-produced short segments) have been used in such experiments. For example, to study what kinds of stories preschool children enjoy, four kinds of program segments (each about 5 minutes long) were produced by variously combining two factors — complexity of images (2 levels) and complexity of narrative (2 levels). The following conclusions were reached: "The 3-year-olds and the 6-year-olds were almost the same in their 'gazing rate' (that is, the percentage of the time the child is gazing at the TV screen) but there was a big difference in the degree of their understanding of the contents .... If both the images and narration are simple and clear, there is a possibility that the gazing rate will rise."[45] Furthermore, in another experiment, it was found that "even when the same story is presented, children viewing a program with a slower pace may look bored but still remember the contents of

the program well. But, in the case of a fast-paced program, the children are apparently attracted but do not quite remember what they have seen."[46]

Such research has been providing important information to those producing programs for preschool children. It is essential that such studies should be carried on in continual and close consultation with producers. In 1979, the producers of NHK's "With Mother," the researchers at the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, and developmental psychologists and pedagogists at universities got together to form a project team called the Research Project on Television Programming for Two-year-olds, and they have since been working to develop TV programs for young children. In doing so, they have adopted the methods of audience surveys and viewing-experiments using test-produced programs (such as that mentioned above), and then creating programs based on the results of such studies.[47]

For example, when a Yoga calisthenics segment was newly introduced into "With Mother," 8 segments were first produced under different conditions, based on the results of studies made by the above-mentioned Research Project, and these were shown to a number of 2-year-olds. Then, after recording and analyzing how the children responded to each, suggestions were made to the producers and improvements were achieved.

At present, this project team is conducting experimental studies aimed at the development of a short TV animation series concerning children's discipline.

Besides such NHK programs for preschool children, the commercial station's series "Open Up! Ponkikki" (1973-) also deserves attention as the outcome of production efforts made through close collaboration of researchers and program producers.[48]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A survey of the literature on research about the impact of TV on child development over the last thirty years shows that most studies have focused on the relation between TV-viewing and study hours, intellectual capability, crime and passivity. No fewer than ten reviews have been published so far to sum up the findings of such studies, but no conclusion has yet been reached about whether TV is harmful or not. Without really dealing with the contents of programs, all these studies have tried to play it safe by examining established hypotheses, such as those stating that TV makes children passive, escapist or violence prone.

It is indeed extremely difficult for developmental psychologists and mass communication researchers to make any comment on important questions such as how the contents of the program watched by children later affect their world-views and ways of life. But this is precisely the problem which concerns parents and teachers. Very few studies about TV's impact on children have been based on social surveys and different types of tests dealing with a particular program at a certain period.

When we look at the actual state of TV programming for children, we notice two different types of attitudes taken in program production: one emphasizes the importance of audience ratings, i.e., producing programs which will be easily liked by children; and the other attitude is trying to find out what TV can do to help improve children's lives and promote their cultural awareness. In order to encourage programs promoting healthy mental development, we believe that researchers should continue studies about the effects of TV based on the analysis of program contents. We should also clarify how each individual's way of thinking changes according to the contents of TV programs viewed during the preschool years.

Takeo Furu stated in 1965 that he had planned the Shizuoka Surveys not for testing any hypothesis, but to fulfill a social obligation. We now live in a multi-media age, and more and more audio-visual media intended for children are just around the corner. On the other hand, the anti-social tendencies of children have become a

grave social issue. The role of television in children's daily lives should be the focus of future studies, and these studies should not be fettered by established models of mass communication researchers.

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